



Legislation Text

File #: GID-1819-14, **Version:** 2

ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$56,082 FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE/OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS (DOJ/OJP) THROUGH THE OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME AND AUTHORIZED THROUGH THE VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT (VOCA) TO BE USED BY THE NORMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT TO EMPLOY A VICTIM ADVOCATE (AND PROVIDE ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT) AND BUDGET APPROPRIATION FROM THE SPECIAL REVENUE GRANT FUND.

BACKGROUND: The U.S. Department of Justice, fiscal year 2018 Victims Assistance Formula Grant, announced that grant funds totaling \$39,885,767 (for the state of Oklahoma) are available with the goal of providing direct services to victims of crime. Specifically, services must (1) respond to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims; (2) assist primary and secondary victims of crime to stabilize their lives after victimization; (3) assist victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and (4) provide the victims of crime with a measure of safety and security.

The City of Norman is fortunate to have access to advocates through the Women's Resource Center, Mary Abbott Children's House, and the Cleveland County District Attorney's Office. The Women's Resource Center provides services to victims of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. Mary Abbott Children's House provides services to victims and families of child abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Incidents from these two agencies accounted for 4% of our violent offenses and 6% of our victims. When we consider all of these incidents together, we find that there are no services provided for 72% of our violent offenses and to 62% of our victims. These underserved members of the community include: relatives of homicide victims; assault (non-child abuse/sexual abuse/neglect and non-domestic violence/stalking/sexual assault) victims; robbery victims; gang violence; hate/bias crimes; DUI; economic exploitation/fraud; and elder abuse.

Our District Attorney's Office provides Victim-Witness assistance to all victims of violent crimes. Unfortunately, although victims are provided assistance with filing for compensation, the Victim-Witness Office predominantly serves victims during prosecution which is well after the conclusion of an investigation. With 32% of our violent offenses closed by an arrest, that leaves 68% of our total violent offenses never being referred to the District Attorney's Office. Unless those victims were fortunate enough to receive services from the Women's Resource Center or Mary Abbott Children's House, they were unlikely to receive any advocacy services or referral information beyond what is required during an initial report. In many instances, where little or no evidence exists, the case may not even be assigned to an investigator. This is a void we want to address.

DISCUSSION: This funding (Sub-Grant **2018-VOCO-NORMAN CI-031**) allows the Norman Police Department to ensure that necessary referrals are made and that these essential services are provided during the initial phase of an investigation at a time when the trauma is acute and the need is pressing. The focus is to reach out to those victims who are not child-victims, domestic violence/stalking/sexual assault victims, and to those with cases that either are never prosecuted or may take months before the case is turned over to the District Attorney. Our goal is to ensure that every victim of a violent crime has access to services, is given assistance from the earliest opportunity, and has a voice throughout an investigation.

Funding in an amount of up to \$56,082 has been awarded, with a mandatory 25% City of Norman match, for the hiring of a Victim Advocate to improve notification services to the victims of violent crime, improve the coordination of victim services during the course of an investigation, improve coordination with collaborative agencies through Cleveland County, and identify currently untracked underserved populations within the City of Norman. The performance period for this grant runs from 10-01-2018 to 09-30-2019.

While VOCA funding may be renewed each year with the demonstration of program achievement, this funding source should be considered temporary. We anticipate having access to this level of funding for approximately three years. After that time the City of Norman should be prepared to either continue with the position using VOCA funds (if available) or creating a permanent position.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the grant be accepted and that \$56,082 be appropriated from Special Revenue Fund Balance (account 022-0000-253.20-00) to the following accounts:

Employee Salaries (account 022-6043-421.20-01), \$48,474;
Benefits (account 022-6043-421.29-01), \$3,708;
Telecommunications Equipment / Computers (account 022-6043-421.53-02), \$1,800;
Telecommunications Equipment / Software (account 022-6043-421.53-04), \$1,700;.
Maintenance Supplies / Telecommunication (account 022-6043-421.32-04), \$400.

When grant reimbursement funds are received, they will be deposited into VOCA Grant Revenue (account 022-0000-331.13-67).